Proposal to RPC re : Fulton Houses/NYCHA

Received: **Saturday, June 22, 2019 8:17 PM**

From: **Louis Flores louis.py.flores@gmail.com**

To: **Reclaim Pride Discussion Group rcpdiscussion@googlegroups.com**

CC: **team@mg.fightfornycha.org**

Hi,

Fight For NYCHA is a group of activists supporting public housing tenants in New York City to stop the demolition and hand-over of public housing to private landlords ("RAD conversion"). Right now, our activities are centered around the Fulton Houses, a NYCHA public housing development located in Chelsea.

We were very excited to see that RPC has declared that it is engaged in a campaign for "economic justice" for the community, a rejection of corporations seizing community events in a subversive effort to pink-wash the social, legal, and economic damage wreaked by corporations. *See* Corey Kilgannon, *'Clash of Values': Why a Boycott Is Brewing Over Pride Celebrations*, The New York Times (20 June 2019), https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/20/nyregion/nyc-pride-march.html.

Your principled stand is impressive. News of the RPC's Queer March in the *New York Times* followed by one day the publication of black feminist Barbara Smith's essay in which she revealed that the path to queer liberation cannot ignore the systems of oppression that ensure discrimination based on factors other than sexual orientation or gender identity. *See* Barbara Smith, *Reflections On Life After Stonewall : Barbara Smith : Why I Left the Mainstream Queer Rights Movement*, The New York Times (19 June 2019), https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/19/us/barbara-smith-black-queer-rights.html (noting that impediments to liberation, such as violence, are "exacerbated by poverty and racism," adding that "Gaining rights for some while ignoring the violation and suffering of others does not lead to justice. At best it results in privilege.").

There is an LGBTQ community in Fulton Houses in Chelsea. As Chelsea faces endless gentrification, there are economic pressures coming to bear on LGBT individuals and families, including at Fulton Houses. These pressures include the potential demolition and RAD conversion of Fulton Houses. It has been acknowledged by New York City Government that demolition is being proposed for some apartment buildings at Fulton Houses due to the ability for new construction to raise revenue. (*See* https://www1.nyc.gov/site/nycha/about/press/pr-2019/pr-20190510.page). As with demolition of public housing in other cities, such as Chicago, demolition of public housing takes place when City real property becomes attractive for private sector development. But the consequences facing public housing tenants, including the LGBT community at Fulton Houses, locally, and across NYCHA, City-wide, is too severe for demolition and RAD conversion to be accepted without a fight. If demolition is allowed to take place at Fulton Houses, it would set a dangerous precedent that the real estate industry and Big Business can continue to seize strategic public assets (like public charity hospitals, community gardens, armouries, public libraries, public schools, and —now — public housing) for luxury development. Amongst the proposals for the sites to be demolished at Fulton Houses is a plan to erect 70/30 luxury buildings. The gentrification resulting from all of unchecked luxury development in Chelsea, which is an express product of Government policy, creates a positive feedback loop, meaning the more gentrification that takes place, the more the detriment to the community, like yielding cuts in social services for ppl living with low incomes. Not only is the Government cutting back on services (like after-school programs at Hudson Guild at the Chelsea-Elliott Houses), but private business are also cutting back on services to ppl living with low incomes. In 2017, Gristedes suspended its acceptance of WIC, a Federal nutrition supplement program for families with infants. *See* Dusica Sue Malesevic, *Community Wants WIC Participation at Gristedes ; Activists and Ownership are Talking*, The Villager (2 Nov. 2017), https://www.thevillager.com/2017/11/community-wants-wic-participation-at-gristedes-activists-and-ownership-are-talking/.

In due consideration of the foregoing, Fight For NYCHA respectfully comes to the Reclaim Pride Coälition, requesting that RPC to make a public statement, joining Fight For NYCHA's campaign to preserve and expand public housing in New York City, including saving Fulton Houses from demolition and stopping the proposed RAD conversion of public housing. Our three-part demand is to :

1/. To keep public housing public ;
2/. To oppose the demolition and RAD conversion of Fulton Houses and of any NYCHA public housing development ; and
3/. To find all $32 billion in capital improvement needs for NYCHA.

Poverty and racism are serious issues facing the community. As noted by Smith, "One in four people in the L.G.B.T.Q. community experienced food insecurity in 2017. Twenty-four percent of lesbians and bisexual women earn less than the federal poverty line. L.G.B.T.Q. youth have a 120 percent higher risk of experiencing homelessness than heterosexual, cisgender youth." Because POC make up 90% of public housing tenants in New York City, any Government act that is carried out to the detriment of public housing tenants that has a disproportionate affect based on race can be deemed biased and discriminatory, which is illegal under the law. The community already faces oppression by the free market system, and to allow the free market system to engage in racist housing policies and to continue its unchecked thieving of strategic public assets, now public housing, is unconscionable. We hope RPC can join our fight by issuing a public statement of your own making, signing on to our demands.

When the Municipal public housing agency, the New York City Housing Authority, was formed in 1934, it was a revolutionary act to create "government housing." Public opinion at that time then held that housing construction and maintenance should be treated as a social good, not unlike public education and public transportation. *See PUBLIC HOUSING ASKED BY WORKERS*, The New York Times (29 June 1934), https://www.nytimes.com/1934/06/29/archives/public-housing-asked-by-workers-social-control-just-as-in-education.html. At the opening of the first public housing development in New York, in 1935, our bi-sexual First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt was on-hand, saying that there was an urgent need for low-cost housing. See 'FIRST HOUSES' OPEN, ROOSEVELT HAILS NEW SLUM POLICY, The New York Times (4 December 1935), https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1935/12/04/93506973.html?pageNumber=1. Now, like then, the free market is showing us that it cannot produce low-cost housing for ppl living with very low incomes. There was a need then, as now, for Government housing.

Given your fight for "economic justice" and the need to address causes of oppression "exacerbated by poverty and racism," we hope RPC can issue a public statement, adopting the demands put forth by Fight For NYCHA. We are available in person to answer all questions to the satisfaction of RPC.

Thank you kindly.

on behalf of :

Fight For NYCHA
https://fightfornycha.org/
team@mg.fightfornycha.org

Louis Flores
louis.py.flores@gmail.com
1 (929) 279-2292